

Model Essay: take a look at what analysis & synthesis looks like –

Simpson 1	
Lisa Simpson Ms. Bowen American Literature and Composition 28 October 2012	
Thin Line between Civility and Savagery: Ironic Societies of Poe and Connell	Strong and specific title
For centuries, authors have explored the nature of humanity, scratching the surface of society's thin veneer to unveil the true, but hidden, nature of man—our goals, our fears, our failures. Yet what defines humanity proves difficult to reconcile, as mankind wavers between the constraints of society and the sway of instinct. One such author to explore the depths of the divide between civility and savagery, 19 th century American writer Edgar Allan Poe, most famously portrays the primal instincts – far removed from polite society – that lead his characters to madness and savagery; in “The Cask of Amontillado,” Poe ironically sets his story of unbridled vengeance against the backdrop of high Venetian society, a world of servants, feasts, and balls. Likewise, 20 th century American writer Richard Connell describes the thin veil that separates man from beast; in “The Most Dangerous Game,” Connell turns the hunter into the hunted when the protagonist Sanger Rainsford leaves the grand mansion with its ornate, opera-accompanied dinners of host General Zaroff. For both Poe and Connell, the slide from civil to savage is one that takes only a single step into the catacombs below Madras Gras or the jungles of the Caribbean.	Creative hook that engages reader with universal idea
In his story “The Cask of Amontillado,” Poe presents revenge, enabled by man's capacity to reason, as man's most vicious talent and as the antithesis to humanity. Montresor's plan for retribution is one governed by rationality but mandated by madness. In this shift from civil to savage, Montresor lures Fortunato away from festive Venetian society on what appears to be a civilized mission to evaluate wine, but the voyage teeters into madness once the men enter the catacombs laying just below society's rules. Poe uses vivid imagery to paint the chilling image of underground madness: “long walls of piled skeletons, with casks and puncheons intermingling, into the inmost recesses of the catacombs” (Poe 64). In this commingling of death and wine exist the traces of civilization fragmented by insanity; Poe juxtaposes the rational plan and mad obsession that both serve Montresor in fulfilling his revenge fantasy. The farther the two men descend into the catacombs the	Background info about each author and text
	Thesis asserts the theme common to both texts
	Topic sentence asserts theme unique to work A
	Chunk 1 – context for first supporting detail, sentence lead-in, quote and commentary

more confused Montresor's mind becomes. He loses hold of the rational plan, and more sadistically lingers to hear Fortunato's pleas for help before sealing the catacomb wall. Here, Poe's character ironically repeats the phrase "for the love of God" to underscore Montresor's descent into savagery (Poe 68-69). When Fortunato utters the phrase, he appeals to Montresor's compassion and sense of humanity (both connected to civilized society), but Montresor, delirious in accomplishing his fantasy, cries a mad prayer to his own insane vision of God, a deity that permits him to murder at will. As reflective of Poe's view of humanity, in all of its darkness and cruelty, Montresor fully abandons society's norms, rational thought, and religious mandates for mad obsessions and sadistic impulses in the hidden world of the catacombs.

Similar to Poe, Connell suggests how man's primitive desire to hunt and kill exists within, and an isolated environment only exacerbates these feelings. Connell presents the descent into savagery as a mental degradation emphasized by a geographic one: on the deserted Ship Trap Island, with its ironic contradiction of civilized appearances in the mansion and chaotic barbarity in the jungle. Connell employs situational irony to create this contrast, as Rainsford first considers the island and mansion his salvation with its "medieval magnificence...[that] suggested a baronial hall of feudal times with its oaken panels, its high ceilings, its vast refectory table where twoscore men could sit down to eat" (Connell 222). Through Connell's use of concrete imagery, he conveys how the mansion and the refined taste of its owner, General Zaroff, represent the height of civilized society, which only underscores the lack of civility that lurks under the surface. Connell further suggests that despite the polish of silver and gold, Rainsford suspects that all is not as it appears, that an undercurrent of savagery contradicts the gilded pleasantries. Zaroff's madness mirrors Montresor's: rationality fuels his madness. Zaroff's desire for a challenge – for cunning prey and strategic play – pushes him to cross the line from civil sport to barbaric slaughter. Through Connell's suspenseful narration to the moment when Zaroff makes clear his brutish intentions to Rainsford, Connell illuminates the complexities of separating man from beast, from rationality with savagery: "I wanted the ideal animal to hunt...[the animal] must have courage, cunning, and, above all, it must be able to reason" (Connell 225). Zaroff, living in isolation on Ship Trap Island, allows his rationality to become a perverted desire for the ultimate hunt and cunning prey. Through such intricate dialogue and characterization, Connell presents a world where madness results in a macabre world of torture and pain, all concealed in the hidden layers of civilized prosperity.

Poe and Connell, writing during two periods of pronounced social upheaval (the Industrial Revolution and World War I, respectively), both demonstrate the need to maintain (apparent) social stability. Connell presents a character in Rainsford who sacrifices his moral high-ground (and possibly his sanity) but keeps the appearance of stability, taking “the very excellent bed” in the comfort of civilized society, when he chooses to kill Zaroff even after Zaroff admits defeat (Connell 236). Terry Thompson describes the story as an allegory of 20th century instability and realignment: “In Sanger Rainsford – the rugged American individualist – democratic optimism and Emersonian self-reliance are brought to the fore to vanquish the embodiment of an outdated, intractable, and decadent colonial system that has outlived its time yet still clings stubbornly to the remnants of old grandeur and martial glory, however tattered or decrepit” (n.p.). Thompson notes Rainsford’s victory over Zaroff’s savagery, but he fails to note that Rainsford risks his moral character in becoming more like Zaroff when Rainsford choose the preservation (and appearance) of society’s stability over his own moral code. Like Connell, Poe searches for the comfort of the status quo through the characterization of his protagonist, Montresor, who leaves his evil and madness (along with Fortunato’s corpse) in the catacombs, returning to polite society where “for the half of a century no mortal has disturbed them” (Poe 68). Poe exonerates Montresor’s sins for the “*pace*” or peace it lends to society (Poe 68). In their desire to maintain much-needed stability amid the chaos of the Industrial Revolution and World War I, both Poe and Connell suggest that the appearance of a stable society far outweighs the need for genuine morality, that society can hide its sins of madness and savagery behind the curtain of civilization.

In their suspenseful tales of morality, Poe and Connell prove that that the thin veneer between genuine goodness and innate evil erodes during times of social breakdown. In Connell’s tale, the “good guy” survives only because he resorts to the evil the game requires; in Poe’s tale, the “bad guy” survives because he buries his evil under the surface of social niceties. The divide between savagery and civility is merely the matter of a short journey from plaza to catacombs, from dining room to jungle, from rationality to madness.